

Executive Summary

11-9076

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DOI

3 November 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

1. This memorandum is for information only.

STAT 2. I furnished [] pursuant to my recent memo to you,
with a copy of the attached translation of an article in a Moscow newspaper,
"Party Life," by Herbert Aptheker, a white American who is now back in New
STAT York. [] is quite excited about this article by an American even though
he is a Communist. He believes it extremely aggressive and threatening.

He will give it attention in a forthcoming issue of []

STAT []
3. You may want to pass out copies of this translation within the
Government.

[] STAT
STANLEY J. GROCAN
Assistant to the Director

cc: DDCI

Report U- 3,056,473

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FOREIGN DOCUMENTS DIVISION

FORTY YEARS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE USSR

Herbert Apteker

Partinava Zhigol

Moscow, No 20, 17 Oct 1959

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[This report has not been edited or prepared for publication.]

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FORTY YEARS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE US

Moscow, Pravda Zhizn',

Herbert Aptaker

No 20, 17 October 1959

The Communist Party of the United States of America is marking the fortieth anniversary of its existence. Despite severe persecution on the part of the reaction, the Communist Party continues to live and to work. The very existence for 40 years of a Marxist-Leninist Party in the citadel of international imperialism, where the teachings of Marx have been repeatedly pronounced as "refuted," demonstrates the vivacious power of dialectic materialism and causes the magnates of capitalism to fly into a rage.

The first American Communist club was already organized in New York in 1852. The year 1900 was marked by the establishment of the Socialist Party of the United States. The American trade union movement formed itself on a solid organizational basis on a national scale with the establishment of the AFL. The basis was also laid for the contemporary negro movement of liberation.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, strong leftist organizations appeared among the numerous foreign national groups. In 1905, the merger of relatively influential anarcho-syndicalist trends into the organization known as the International Workers of The World took place which gave the whole workers movement a militant and radical character.

In this period the socialist party cemented the political, organizational, and cultural strivings of leftist elements. The importance of these strivings increased particularly with the appearance of clouds on the international horizon which turned into the first World War. The Socialist Party was dominated by anti-imperialist and antiwar trends. The leadership of the Socialist Party, however, like the leaders of the Second International, denounced their antiwar convictions when in 1917 the United States entered the imperialist war. A considerable part of the leadership of the Socialist party supported the bloody war.

The left wing of the Socialist Party, however, including a great part of its members, continued to stand on a solid antiwar position even after the United States had entered war. These leftist forces were tempered in the cruel persecutions on the part of the government of President Wilson, were strengthened in the course of the leadership of the great strikes in the years 1917-1919 (the two most important were the strikes of the workers of the canning industry and of the steel workers headed by William Z. Foster); they were inspired by the Great October Socialist Revolution of the Russian workers.

In 1918, the leaders of the American workers class had an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the works of Lenin which illuminated their road in the struggle against imperialism and for the victory of socialism in the United States. The forces which represented the left wing began

to unite with the aim of creating a new, Marxist-Leninist party of the workers class. In September 1919, a communist party was found in the United States.

The party's first years of existence were very difficult. The persecution on the part of the government put it into a semillegal position while leftist and sectarian elements did not permit effective party work. But even then the party waged a bold struggle for the interests of the exploited and oppressed. It came out in support of Soviet Russia. The party exposed the imperialist and chauvinist interventionist policy of the American imperialists in Latin America and helped to organize impressive mass demonstrations against the repeated intervention of the American Marine Corps in Latin American countries.

Under conditions of the postwar "boom" of 1922-1928 when the revisionists and apologists of capitalism assured everyone that "America has refuted Marx" and that "Ford defeated him," the Communist Party firmly held its Marxist positions. Beginning in 1925, the party began to exert a growing influence on the struggle within the trade union and on the strike movement.

When a severe depression set in the United States after the economic catastrophe of 1929, it was just the Communist Party, despite the fact that it had no more than 7,000 members, which was in the vanguard of the struggle of the unemployed, in the vanguard of the struggle which led to the creation of the CIO and to the enlistment of millions of workers from the basic branches of industry in the trade unions.

The same role was played by the Communist Party in the negro liberation movement and in the organization of mass support for the defense of the main achievements of the "new deal" of President Roosevelt.

In the thirties, the Party expanded its activities and considerably strengthened its influence, turning into a force which influenced the entire life of the country. It became the soul of the antifascist and antiwar movement. After the Hitlerite attack on the Soviet Union, the Communist Party aimed all its efforts at increasing the contribution of the United States to insuring victory over the enemy. True, at that time there were trends in the Party to belittle the class character of the state and also the imperialist character of the war which it had acquired due to the participation of capitalist states in it.

At the end of the Second World War, the monopolist bourgeoisie, feeling that the threat of competition on the part of Germany, Italy, and Japan had been eliminated, returned to its former foreign political line, characterized by hostility toward the Soviet Union and the countries of socialism which had emerged.

At the same time, American imperialism tried to oppress the liberation movement in the colonies and also to gain control over the colonial empires of its "allies," which was only one phase in a campaign for the ultimate goal of world dominance. It is of no small credit to the communist party of the United States that it exposed this trend of American imperialism even at the end of 1945 and helped draw world public attention to it.

After the Second World War, reactionary circles established a regime of terror in the country. Resorting to persecution, force, slander, threats, and prison terms, they tried to suppress any progressive thought or activity and to disband all progressive and truly democratic organizations.

The peak of this terror was McCarthyism. The main enemy of reaction was the vanguard rank of the workers class, the Communist Party. The reaction tried to smash the Communists and to crush Marxist-Leninist ideology in the United States. It spared neither means nor efforts for this purpose, organizing one of the greatest propaganda campaigns in history against the Communists. The ruling circles resorted to "loyalty" checks which encompassed the entire country and adopted laws which resulted in the fact that currently many millions of Americans in all walks of life are subjected to the most diversified checks, the most insulting among them being fingerprinting.

The ruling classes dealt a direct blow at the Communist Party by adopting the Taft-Hartley Law, which practically bans Communists from any posts in trade union organizations. An attack against the party leadership was launched and scores of Communist leaders were sent to prison for many years. Presently, three members of the National Committee of the Communist Party are in prison and many other leaders, including William. Z. Foster, have been handed court indictments.

The Party, however, waged a long struggle against the reaction, the struggle incurring great material expenses. At the same time it warned that the attack against the Communists marked the beginning of a general reactionary campaign which was to threaten the freedom and well-being of all Americans. And, in fact, terror soon grasped millions of Americans, spreading to trade union workers, teachers, physicians, cultural workers, and to all liberal and progressive ideas, laws, and organizations.

The resistance put up by the Communist Party frustrated the plans of the reaction and helped unite broad masses for the struggle against McCarthyism.

The persecution of the government, however, weakened the party and led to a number of its members leaving the party. There was a moment when almost the entire National Committee of the Communist Party was in prison. As a result of this, there were also serious financial difficulties and it was necessary to stop the activities of important party organs. Many people who formerly sympathized with the Party and were considered its friends, turned away from it.

The basic party line at that time was: even though the threat of war and Fascism is very great, it is possible to prevent both in the postwar period, based on the growing forces of democracy, peace, and socialism. One must admit, however, that some party circles and also some members of the Party did not have a correct understanding of this line, and a

trend appeared maintaining that war and Fascism are not only inescapable, but may possibly be already at hand. In the development of this erroneous interpretation, some organizational measures were taken which also had a negative influence on the party membership.

These conditions and also the so-called "boom" were a specific breeding ground for opportunism. Opportunism was also based on the unprecedented exploitation of poorly-developed countries by American imperialism. The reactionary forces started a colossal propaganda campaign aimed at refuting Marxism and proving the outdatedness of Communism which was expressed by the "theory of American exceptionalism," which had been revamped to a certain extent. In the heat of the postwar economic boom this propaganda fell on fertile soil.

The situation in the Communist Party became extremely difficult. The crisis of the leftist movement in general and the Communist Party in particular was especially aggravated in 1956 and reached its peak in the period of the counterrevolutionary uprising in Hungary from October to December 1956.

The right-wing as well as the left-wing press, also including the Daily Worker, a paper which was at that time under the editorship of John Gates, who soon afterward betrayed the Communist Party, disseminated the most unbelievable lies about the Hungarian Events and most enraged insults aimed at the Soviet Union.

At the time, the opportunists asserted that, first of all, the class struggle in the United States was a thing of the past; second, that imperialism was either useful or that it had disappeared in the United States, third, that there was no danger of war but that if there was such danger it emanated from the Soviet Union; four, that the trade union organizations were fully-fledged and effective leaders of the workers class and that the latter did not need any other class political organizations, five, that the Negro problem had been solved and that the Negro organizations which are headed by bourgeois elements were fully-fledged effective leaders of the Negro liberation movement; six, that democratic centralism was a paradox and only leads to tyranny and bureaucracy; seven, that Leninism was inapplicable to American conditions and that dialectical materialism was nothing more than a method of procedure which could be applied according to existing necessity; eight, that therefore, there was no need for a Communist Party, that it had discredited itself and, in fact, had become an obstacle for the progressive development of the United States and that it should, therefore, be liquidated. Under the guise of the struggle for national "independence" revisionism in fact set out on chauvinistic positions with very strong anti-Soviet tendencies.

The rank-and-file members of the party, particularly those among the workers, did not adopt the road of treason. A considerable part of the leaders also remained on Marxist-Leninist positions. We must

particularly mention Comrade William Z. Foster who, more than anybody else, helped raise high the banner of Marxism-Leninism in the United States and safeguard the purity of the Communist Party.

Thanks to the vital force of Marxism-Leninism and also thanks to the firm positions of the rank-and-file members of the Party and the group of stable leaders, the Party succeeded in living through this most serious crisis. In the beginning of 1957, the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of the United States took place. Although the congress made certain concessions to revisionism, particularly with regard to the question of democratic centralism and the assessment of the significance of proletarian internationalism, yet its most important contribution consisted in saving the Party and insuring continued existence of a Marxist-Leninist party in the United States.

After the 16th Congress, the Party began nursing its wounds and restoring its strength. The National Committee Plenum which took place in February 1958 was symptomatic in this respect. It insured the further rallying of the Party on the basis of the principles of Marxism-Leninism. This permitted the overcoming of the paralysis which in the course of a number of months had been inhibiting the activities of the Party.

Organizational activities revived, the loss in the number of party members was made up, and a certain number of new members, particularly among the youth, was acquired. The Party tackled educational work and

the dissemination of Marxist literature. The most important thing was that the Party resumed participation in mass work. This refers to the inter-trade union struggle, to a demonstration of jobless people that took place recently, to certain aspects of the struggle of the Negroes, particularly to the movement for integrated children's education in schools.

The Party plays a considerable role in the struggle against military preparations and the foreign policy of "cold war." It extends assistance to various mass anti-militaristic organizations and has begun developing a struggle for peace directly among the masses. In recent times, it has organized street meetings and demonstrations in some very large cities.

The party achieved definite successes in the struggle against revisionism. In an organizational respect, although revisionism has already been rooted out, much remains to be done to eliminate this poison from the sphere of ideology.

The internal political development in the United States and international events showed the bankruptcy of revisionism and the "theory of exceptionality." This has been of tremendous significance in strengthening our party.

At the time when the revisionists glorified the "progressive" character of American imperialism, the latter's agents brought down the people's government in Guatemala, its marines landed in Lebanon, its navy blockaded China, and its dollars and airplanes supported mercenary regimes, beginning with Syngman Rhee in South Korea and ending with Batista in Cuba.

In that time, when the revisionists asserted that "Communism experiences a crisis" the socialist world was marching from one grandiose victory to another. The Soviet Union achieved tremendous successes in developing production, science, technology, education, health preservation, in housing construction, successes which amazed even the bourgeois press. The 21st Congress of the CPSU opened up wide vistas for the building of Communism. The achievements of the Chinese People's Republic and the other countries of the socialist camp are tremendous. The Communist movement in the capitalist has also strengthened and expanded its positions.

On the other hand, in the United States capitalism experienced three economic slumps within the 15 postwar years and each subsequent crisis was more profound and lasted longer than the previous one. The last crisis of 1957-1958 proved the most profound and prolonged. This led to an increase in the number of unemployed. Today, even the government acknowledges the existence in the country of 4 million fully unemployed people. According to official statistics, about 20 million people in the United States live in most genuine penury. Although the revisionists began a hue and cry about the fact that allegedly Americans belong to the "middle class" and that there are "no more" destitute people in the country, yet about one third of the families in the United States have an annual income which is considerably below the minimum subsistence level determined by the government.

Contrary to the assertions of the revisionists that the Negro question has allegedly been solved in the United States, the situation in this field has become in effect so acute that it calls to mind the situation which existed in the decade which preceded the Civil War.

The revisionists asserted that a "cash consciousness" has replaced "class consciousness." As usual, the opposite is true. In recent years, along with the increase in prices and raising of taxes and also along with the intensification of labor, the militant mood of the workers has strengthened. The number of strikes has increased and a tendency has emerged for them to become more prolonged. Particular persistence has been displayed by textile in North Carolina, bus drivers in New York, automobile industry workers in the state of Michigan, and steel workers in the entire country.

To put it briefly, life has refuted all fundamental assertions of the American revisionists. Regardless of all their efforts, the reaction and the revisionists did not succeed in discrediting the Communist Party in the eyes of the masses. The party serves the masses where it is afforded an increasingly cordial welcome. It leads a many-sided struggle and shows the way to the solving of problems confronting the workers' class, the Negroes, and all American people.